

CHAPTER 3



The Basics of Reading People

Think how wonderful life would be if you could recognize whether someone had a positive or a negative effect upon you, or whether the person really liked or loved you. Wouldn't it be valuable to know if someone was lying or genuinely had your best interests at heart?

While most people believe that you're hearing your inner voice or trusting your instinct or your gut is an inexplicable phenomenon, it is not. It is a concrete, neurobiological experience that comes by paying close attention to the four codes of communication—speech, voice, body and facial language—which I will be explaining in greater detail throughout this book.

The ability to harness the skill of reading others is not an art. It is a science. It is heightened awareness that comes from being in tune with one's senses. Emotions such as fear, anger, and happiness originate in the brain, which controls how those feelings are communicated via speech and facial expression. A person's voice, tone, posture or body stance, and facial expressions are the result of the brain's intricate wiring.

The Four Codes of Communication

There are four primary codes of communication, which are processed in the brain. Two of these, the speech and vocal codes, are processed auditorily, while the other two, facial and body language codes, are processed visually. This chapter provides an overview of these codes; chapters 5–8 will explore them in more depth.

Although different areas of the brain are utilized to process the information received in these codes of communication, the brain arrives at an assessment of how one reacts to these codes emotionally. The result is that all the codes are integrated to form a personality profile of an individual.

Next, the internal aspect of the brain begins to make an assessment whether someone is suited for us based on the emotional assessment of the individual's personality type. These codes provide a clearer picture of one of the fourteen personality profiles we will discuss later, in Chapter 9. When deciphering these codes, I am talking about vocal and speaking behaviors, movements in our body and facial language we can do something about.

To make judgments solely on physical appearance as the early literature on this subject did is extremely dangerous and perpetuates prejudice. That is not what this book is about. This book is designed to help people, not to alienate them. It will help you recognize signs others transmit, which can work for you or against you. You will discover behavior in others that you can or cannot tolerate, depending upon your own personality. It will help you make the right decisions as to who should be in your life.

Listening to the Speaking Code

How you sound provides only some of the clues to inner reality; the words you use and what you actually *say* when you speak are also important. What do people really mean by what they say? Are

they sincere? Do they give backhanded compliments (uttering pleasantries that deep down are really cutting remarks)? Do they gossip about you? Do they constantly speak about themselves? What is their grammar and vocabulary like? What are they really saying between the lines?

Hearing the Vocal Code

The way you sound is an important clue to the way you are. You experience this when you answer the telephone. In an instant, you detect a mood coming from the voice on the other end. The vocal code pertains to the tone of voice. Many aspects are familiar, but you may not have paid close attention. They involve the pitch of a person's voice (whether it is high or low), the quality of the voice (whether the person mumbles, trails off, is whiny, harsh, gravelly, hoarse, breathy, melodious, rich, resonant, dull, lifeless, enthusiastic, agitated, attacking, sickeningly sweet, or sing-songy), and the volume and rate of speech, primarily dealing with the mechanical aspects of a person's speaking pattern.

Watching the Body Language Code

The body language code is like a personal blueprint, showing how one walks, sits, and stands. Posture of the head is an essential component in analyzing the body language code, as is the use of the arms and legs. For example, how much space does a person use when sitting, or how close does he or she stand next to you?

Looking at the Facial Code

Every face has an expression and we read people from their faces. The facial code reflects how a person holds his or her face when listening and speaking. Eye contact is as crucial, as is how a person controls the mouth. Does he or she keep the mouth open when listening or purse the lips? Does the person furrow the brow, look away, break eye contact? Paying close attention to facial expression can open a new world in reading what a person is really saying. Each of these behaviors speak volumes about someone.

Later, I will explain what can be learned about people from their facial expressions. We will evaluate patterns, such as what it means when a person has a clenched or tense jaw, an aloof or deadpan expression, or an overly animated expression. We will learn the significance of blushing or blanching, staring, and facial twitches, and will see what it means when the eyes are open wide when someone is speaking, when the eyes wander, the lips are licked or chewed, and the nose is wrinkled. And we will learn what it means to have a confident facial expression.

Read Them, Heed Them

It is essential that you accurately identify the underlying emotional tone in each situation. You will be able to employ the codes of facial activities and body language so you quickly identify the negative tones in any situation. That way, you don't get hurt—*emotionally slapped*.

While it is good to be open-minded, I strongly urge you to be very wary of those who set off your alarm systems. Whether you like it or not, there are toxic people who can harm you. These people have personality traits that can be detrimental to your well-being and hazardous to your health. This is natural—we don't

have to like and feel good about everyone, just as everyone doesn't have to like and feel good about us.

The first thing you need to ask yourself after you have read someone is *How do they make me feel—good or bad?* Answering this simple question can save you a lot of grief. Most people never dream of asking such a question, let alone doing anything about it. If a person consistently makes you feel bad, you have to ask why you'd want to be around them. If you are deciding whether to do business with someone, for instance, and you ask yourself this simple question, you will be doing yourself a huge favor in the long run.

Using Your Brain

Emotional and Vocal Leakage

A recent discovery has revealed that the cranial nerves, located within the brain, control *both* facial expression and vocal expression. That means the same cranial stimuli that trigger our facial expressions also control our vocal expressions. This is manifested in what I call *vocal leakage*. Even if you are trying to hide your feelings, your true emotions will “leak” in both your facial expressions and your voice.

You and Your Neuroconnections

Consider a person who suffers a stroke that affects the area on the left side of the brain that controls speech. When this area is damaged, the brain has to work extra hard and call upon crossover areas of the brain to compensate. As a result, when the person who has had a stroke speaks, words come out labored, halting, and repetitive. The person must tap into the right neural connections to hear the words, translate the meaning, think what to say, and have the

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speech areas stimulate various neuropathways to control facial muscles. To a lesser extent a liar is performing the same neural dance, although it takes much more skill to recognize it.

Imagine being so in tune with your senses that you can easily detect such tiny shifts—whether they occur as a flash of movement in a person's expression or a change in vocal pattern—to know exactly what a person means. You will learn how to quickly read messages that others are trying to convey, even though they may not want you to know. Even the chronically clueless can learn to read the messages by understanding the four codes of communication.

There Is Only One Brain, Not Two

Many misconceptions have been perpetuated by writers of self-help books, especially those on gender differences. I refer particularly to discussions about the “right” brain and “left” brain. The left side has been referred to as the “female” brain and the right side as the “male” brain. This information is both erroneous and misguided. In fact, the brain functions as a complex integrated unit, containing two hemispheres, a left and a right, which are *not* separate entities.

The brain is covered by an outer layer called the cortex. There are four lobes, or areas, of the brain, each of which has different responsibilities: the frontal lobe is responsible for reasoning; the parietal lobe is responsible for sensory inputs; the occipital lobe is responsible for sight; and the temporal lobe is responsible for speech memory, language, and hearing. Research shows, however, that many functions cross over.

Voice and speech patterns emanate primarily from the left side of the brain, which is responsible for speech and language, from regions in the brain called Broca's area and Wernicke's area. An area located deep within the brain called the limbic system (housing the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems) enables us to have specific emotional responses when we listen to certain

voices, hear certain tones, or see people we know or don't know. Some of these emotional responses may be positive, others negative. The limbic system allows us to feel emotions such as anger, love, excitement, disgust, rage, and sadness. Certain sounds, tones, and words may bring out the worst in a person while other people's tones and words may elicit positive emotional feelings.

Use More of Your Brain

Researchers who study the concept of meditation have determined that there is an enormous potential of untapped resource in the brain, which is stimulated through the focus and concentration of meditative techniques. When we uncover the mysteries of the working brain and learn more about its anatomy and function, we begin to understand that if we develop certain areas, we will become more productive in our daily lives.

By learning to access and stimulate the emotional centers of our brain, we can begin to live a richer and more advantaged life. We will detect certain danger signals a lot faster, determine who is the right mate for us, or sense who is trying to cheat us.

We need to become more conscious of how our brain operates and integrate both areas of our brain: the upper portion of our brain, the cortex, where we objectively see and hear information, and the lower part of our brain, the limbic system, where we feel the emotions we see and hear. We do this by training ourselves to be aware of what we are feeling. This will be invaluable to us in the long run.

Mrs. Jones hears her husband's attacking tone in the upper portion of her brain. She processes the information in her left hemisphere, where she realizes, intellectually, that he is wrongly interpreting what she has said. With that part of her brain, she visually sees the makeup on his collar and the credit card calls to another woman.

Now, with the deeper area of her brain, she is able to feel the emotions of everything she objectively saw and heard. She feels

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the anger of his betrayal, the jealousy over another woman, and the sadness that their marriage is over. As she integrates the two parts of her brain simultaneously, she quickly gets in touch with her emotions.

Don't Get Emotionally Slapped!

Reading a person is a highly emotional experience. It is not enough to determine the codes of behavior and analyze the person's personality type. You have to determine whether you like or dislike that personality type and what it does to you emotionally. You must decide whether that person remains in your life or not.

All too often, we refuse to pay attention to our feelings. Many people don't know how to do this. It can be overwhelming, especially when you haven't been conditioned. Some people have been raised in families where it was taboo to express their emotions, while in other families it was considered bad if you didn't express them.

Even though we have the neurological capacity to react when we see or hear something we like or dislike, we often fail to do so. We may even react days or weeks later to something negative.

Why don't most of us react *immediately* when something isn't right? Why do we wait until it's too late? Why do we make the same mistake in picking the wrong person? We were emotionally slapped—stunned into inaction by the situation.

If someone walked up to you and unexpectedly slapped you in the face, you would undoubtedly be shocked, perhaps so stunned you couldn't move. That is exactly what happens when people are emotionally slapped, stung by someone who says things that are rude and degrading. Sometimes your responses to what they say and do aren't as quick as you'd like. You wish you could have that snappy comeback, but instead you react three days later. That's when you finally realize what the person really meant.

We are shocked when we are emotionally slapped, because most of us can't believe it is happening to us. That is why so many of us become emotionally numb and don't react at all.

With a Friend Like That, Who Needs Enemies?

Paul has known Sandra for more than fifteen years. They have done business together and treated each other with respect. They always asked about the other's family and made nice small talk. They even exchanged Christmas gifts and had each other's families over for dinner.

Paul went out of his way to do Sandra numerous favors. In fact, he was the one who told her about a job opening at a new company. She got the job and wound up tripling her salary.

Paul couldn't count the number of times he dropped what he was doing to help Sandra, even if it didn't benefit Paul in any way. He didn't mind. He was just a friend—a good person. And that is what friends and good people do. Besides, he thought, if he ever were in a bind, Sandra would certainly do the same for him.

In time, Paul needed that favor. He wanted her to make a call to someone he knew, a business contact. Paul would call the person and tell the person to expect a call from Sandra. She, in turn, would say some nice things about Paul. That's all.

When Paul asked for the favor, he watched Sandra's body stiffen, her mouth droop, her forehead furl, her eyebrows knit together. Then she cleared her throat. He realized she would never make that call.

He had improved the quality of Sandra's life by alerting her to a better job and doing many small favors, but she was too selfish to reciprocate. That experience was an emotional slap.

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Green-Eyed Jealous Monster Strikes Again

Maureen and Julie had been friends since childhood. Maureen told Julie she was getting married to a lovely man. She couldn't believe her eyes or ears when Julie replied in a matter-of-fact monotone, "That's nice." Then she swallowed hard and gave Maureen a tense smile, with no teeth showing and a deadpan facial expression.

Translation: "I am so jealous of you, I can't stand it. I am just thinking of myself and really don't care about your happiness!" Maureen definitely got the message. She felt numb. She didn't know what to do or say. She was emotionally slapped.

Like the people in these scenarios, we become so numb from the shock of the experience, we ignore the event itself. Then, when we finally come to and realize what has happened, we feel the emotional pain, and it can be excruciating. Sometimes we cannot bear to experience the pain, so we choose to ignore it. We pretend it never happened. If we keep doing this, we can literally make ourselves sick.

Feel the Signs

Most of us aren't really that surprised when we suspect something negative is going to happen and it finally materializes. If we are aware of reading a person's facial or body language, or their speech or voice patterns, we know what's about to happen. We know we are going to get fired before it happens. We heard it in our boss's tone, or even the secretary's.

Chip knew his boss was going to fire him by the way Lola, his boss's secretary, greeted him on the phone. She used to be so happy when she heard Chip's voice. Now she had a downward-inflected, curt tone. As he listened, he knew what was going to happen.

He believed it was only a matter of time until he would hear the bad news. He remembered there had been a lot more physical

distance between him and his boss. Normally, there was a lot of touching, backslapping, and kidding around.

The boss hardly looked in Chip's direction anymore. His expression was tense, especially around the eyes and the sides of the mouth. He had little to say to Chip, where there used to be a flood of words spewing from his lips. So when Chip was told his services would no longer be needed, even though he felt disappointed and hurt, he wasn't surprised.

Chip was prepared because he used his whole brain and perceived the entire situation. He knew what to expect. He used the parts of his brain responsible for seeing and hearing negative messages he got from his boss and the secretary. He used the internal aspects of his brain to let him know what he was feeling.

The sooner you tap into the maximum capacity of your brain, the sooner you will be able to deal with the truth in reading others.